Practice Guide for Licensing Workers

Teaming

MITEAM COMPETENCY

Licensing is the process of collecting and assessing information to determine if a home is suitable for a foster care placement. The assessment process involves the licensing staff engaging with potential caregivers to acquire the information needed to assess compliance, along with the caregiver's capacity and commitment to serve the characteristics of the children in care. Licensing staff utilize opportunities for engagement to assess the needs of caregivers in an effort to provide support and aide in recruitment and retention strategies.

Teaming is a collective effort that necessitates a team approach. Caseworkers will form a team comprised of the important people in the child and family's life that meets, talks and plans together. Caseworkers will ensure team functioning by making sure the team has the ability and cultural competence to design effective services and supports, adjust as may be needed and use collaborative problem solving.

Observation:

- Helps the individual(s) identify people who are supportive.
- Addresses reasons for reluctance to including specific team members.

Documentation

- A team that provides support to the child(ren)/youth and family has been formed.
- The worker prepares the family team members for participation on the team.
- The family's suggestions and comments are documented in the case file.
- The team member's suggestions and comments are documented in the case file.
- Documentation indicates the worker maintained contact with the family and support persons.
- The family's team meets within the required timeframes (FOM 722-6B).
- There is evidence in the documentation that the team implements specific safety activities to address safety concerns of the child(ren)/youth.
- There is evidence in the documentation that the team addresses specific permanency plans.
- There is evidence in the documentation that the team addresses specific issues of well-being for the child(ren)/youth.

Interview:

- The individual(s) was able to identify helpful activities of the worker.
- The individual(s) reports the worker acknowledged religious and/or cultural beliefs.
- The individual(s) described specific examples where his/her input was utilized in decision-making.

In Supervision:

- Identify how the parent participates in the process of change.
- Identify positive supports for the individual(s).

FIDELITY MEASURES

POLICY REQUIREMENTS	 Support and educate prospective caregivers to ensure safety of children in out of home placements. Give preference to placement with a relative - if all requirements are fulfilled - when children must be removed from their home. Place children in the most family-like setting and keep siblings together whenever possible. Initial and ongoing assessment of rule compliance and safety, as well as thorough recruitment and retention efforts. Preserve and encourage permanent connections with siblings and caring and supportive adults. Assess placements that helps facilitate and support return home if the permanency plan is reunification. Consider a placement with a view toward preparing the child for permanency.
HOW TO USE YOUR SUPERVISOR	 Second set of objectives eyes when you are trying to identify concerns. Explore, with supervisor, community resources and services to assist in placement stability. Discuss with supervisor ways to facilitate engagement with family members. Seek review by supervisor of assessment and decisions around placement. Explore, with supervisor, ways to assess a prospective caregiver's willingness and ability to assist in ensuring that birth parents spend natural, quality time with their child. Track causes of foster home closures to identify effective recruitment and retention strategies.
LICENSING	PRACTICE GUIDANCE
ACTIVITIES	TECHNIQUES
Assist caregiver in identifying formal and informal supports for the child and caregiver.	 Utilize timelines, Eco-maps, Genograms and/or other tools to assist the caregiver in identifying formal and informal supports. Connect caregivers to faith based organization, online community or support group. Use all available human resources-children and youth, parents, maternal and paternal relatives, youth, and community members-to identify extended family networks for the child and caregiver. Attempt to identify supports at every step in the child welfare process, including when children are first placed in the home, in court hearings, and in all team decision-making/family meetings, etc. Empower caregivers to develop partnerships with other community providers that can help meet the needs of children.
Prepare caregivers to be an active part of the family team.	 Help the caregiver identify ways that they can support the birth parents relationship with their child. Inform prospective caregivers of the agency's expectations regarding their role in teaming, with birth parents and other team members, to ensure a child's/youth's needs for safety, permanency and well-being. Remind the caregiver to be mindful of their own frame of reference- personal beliefs and perceptions- when interacting with the birth parents and relatives. Process with the caregiver ways that they can best prepare for attending the family team meeting. Process with the caregiver about how they can best prepare children for the team meeting and parenting time visitation. Remind caregivers that team meetings are opportunities to get to learn more about the birth families and gain beneficial information about the youth. Encourage caregivers to reach out to the youth's family and other supportive individuals to assist in creating a support system for the youth.

LICENSING ACTIVITY

Building working relationships with other programs/agencies to positively impact the continuum of care.

- Educate other programs on the licensing process so they are better informed when working with families.
- Attend family team meetings (FTM) as often as you can to assist in the placement process.
- Share information that is both accurate and timely
- Facilitate open communication between MDHHS/Agency and caregivers
- Empower kinship units, staff and private providers to develop partnerships with other community providers that can help meet the needs of children living with relatives
- Develop kinship-specific provisions in contracts to ensure that private providers understand kinship policy and preferences and employ staff skilled at working with kinship families.
- Partner with community-based organizations that serve caregivers, to ensure that foster families can access needed community supports.
- Identify or develop community support groups for kinship caregivers.